**Franz Cizek**

•Franz Cizek is sometimes called the inventor of “child art”, but in reality he was one of the earliest advocates of child creativity. Cizek’s art classroom was not one of rigid instruction, but one of total freedom and self-exploration.

•Cizek was born in 1865 in the town of Leitmeritz on the Elbe River in Bohemia (now part of the Czech Republic). When he was 19 he moved to Vienna and studied art at the Academy of Fine Arts.

•In 1885 Cizek rented a room with a carpenter’s family with many children. It was here that Cizek had his first experiences working with children, as the carpenter’s kids would often visit him. Cizek would give them drawing materials and encourage them to express their ideas.

•In 1897, Cizek was allowed to open his own Juvenile Art Class with one simple mandate : “Let children grow, develop and mature.” (Smith, 1985)

•In his Juvenile Art Class, a two hour Saturday Program for students ages 5 -14, Cizek approached art making by creating a child friendly environment where formal instruction was non existent and the work was based on nurturing the creative tendencies inherent in all children, allowing them to freely explore their own ideas through a range of materials. (Meredith, 2010)

•The classes were open without charge to the children of Vienna, to work at their own free will. Children were interviewed and selected by Cizek, but not for their artistic promise or social standing.

•Franz Cizek’s life work was to provide a free (both financially and psychologically) studio environment where children could revel in self-discovery. He was not making future artists, but allowing children access to their personal creativity.

Meredith, R. (March, 2010) *Franz Cizek: Liberating the Child Artist* Retrieved from: http://meredithsabbatical.blogspot.com/2010/03/franz-cizek- liberating-child-artist.html

Smith, P (March 1985) *Franz Cizek: The Patriarch*. Art Education, Volume 38 Number 2. pp. 28 - 31